

3 December 1984

DRUG RING/>BROKAW: Special Segment tonight: the pizza connection. >ILLINOIS>Recently, the FBI rounded up a number of people and charged them with being part of elaborate heroin distribution network in America. For some of the suspects, small-town pizza parlors were their cover. And as Brian Ross reports tonight in this Special Segment, the

pizza connection is a sophisticated elaborate scheme that resembles an espionage operation by an enemy country.

ROSS: This is central Illinois farm country, hundreds of miles south of Chicago. Around here, once the corn is harvested and shipped out on Conrail, there's usually not that much to talk about until springtime. But this year in the town of Paris, Ill., there's a lot to talk about. The man everyone knows as Joe the Pizzaman, *Giuseppe Vitelli, who has lived here quietly with his family, has been identified by the FBI as a Mafia mole from Italy, a man in the pizza business but also in the heroin business, allegedly sent here to this remote farm town 11 years ago by his Mafia bosses in Sicily. Two hours away, in Olney, Ill., another Joe the Pizzaman, *Giuseppe Tripiano, who the FBI says is also a Mafia mole, allegedly sent here to open a pizza parlor, raise a family and blend in so that when orders came from Sicily, he could quietly slip away to help smuggle in huge shipments of heroin and then move the heroin to dealers in the big cities. United States Attorney Rudolph Giuliani of New York: RUDOLPH GIULIANI: I'd see them as foreign counterintelligence agents. They were working for the Sicilian Mafia. As best we can tell, they thought that they would increase their ability to conceal themselves by going to small towns rather than operating in big cities where you have big-city police department, departments and a large contingent of FBI and DEA agents who are sensitive to looking for drug dealers.

ROSS: The Mafia agents who are sent to the Middle West all came from this one town in the mountains of Sicily, Ginisi. And according to the FBI, were all hand-picked relatives of the Mafia boss here, *Gitano *Botelamenta, who is now under arrest in New York. The men from these quiet streets established a reputation as the most ruthless and violent Mafia criminals in Sicily, killing off entire rival factions to take over the business of shipping heroin to the United States, the Mafia's most lucrative racket. The men from Ginisi came from the small town and moved to small towns in this country. But there was nothing small-town or small-time about the way they

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set up their business here, establishing contacts on Wall Street and here in Congress. NBC News has found that at least six members of Congress, for reasons that are not known, introduced these private immigration bills to help get the alleged Sicilian Mafia figures into the country in the late 1960s. None of these bills passed, but they were introduced. Sponsors included Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois, who introduced this Senate bill on behalf of one of the Sicilians, *Pietro Alfano, now charged with playing a major role in the Mafia heroin business. Sen. Percy would not talk about the bill, but a spokesman said the senator was asked to introduce the bill by constituents whose names the senator cannot recall. Once in the

country, the Sicilians appeared to have done their heroin dealing for more than 10 years before American authorities caught onto them. These are FBI surveillance pictures taken outside a bakery in New York City that authorities say was another one of the Sicilian Mafia fronts. FBI agents who watched the Sicilians said the heroin and the millions of dollars in profits from the heroin were often carried around in plain brown grocery bags and that in many cases, within hours of leaving here, the cash in the grocery bags was delivered to two big Wall Street brokerage houses and then transferred to Switzerland. Prosecutor Giuliani says his investigation almost fell apart when one of the brokerage houses, E.F. Hutton, told the Sicilians the FBI was asking questions. GIULIANI: ...by E.F. Hutton letting people know, it literally stopped our investigation. And if we had not gotten another break and a couple of other breaks, actually, to, to initiate the investigation all over again, I'm not sure we would have ever been able to eliminate these drug dealers.

ROSS: A spokesman for Hutton says the FBI did not make it clear that Hutton was not suppose to tell the Sicilians about the investigation. Federal authorities say they don't know whether they found all the alleged Mafia moles sent here from Sicily. Joe the Pizzaman in Olney, Ill., and 28 other alleged Mafia agents have pleaded not guilty and will go on trial next year, charged with running the biggest heroin smuggling ring in this country's history. Brian Ross, NBC News, Olney, Ill.